PATENT

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In re Rule 53(b) Continuation of U.S. Patent
Application 10/387,505 filed on March 14, 2003
Inventor: Peter T. Halpin et al.
Serial No: Unassigned — Group Art Unit: Unassigned
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Title: Recovery of Metal Values from Cermet — Atty Dkt: HALP3001CJDB

PETITION TO MAKE SPECIAL UNDER 37 CFR § 1.102(c)

Commissioner for Patents
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Sir:

Applicant hereby requests that the above-identified application be granted special status on the grounds that the invention will materially enhance the quality of the environment.

The present invention relates to the recovery and recycling of metal values found in cermet material. Prior to the present invention, it was not possible to economically recover and recycle the metal content of cermet material, particularly the metal content of used inert anodes made from cermet which are used in the production of aluminum. Consequently, cermet material such as the cermet component of used anodes had to be disposed of in the environment prior to the present invention. In this regard it is noted on page 3, lines 8-13 that:

> Replacing the used anodes with new ones has created a disposal problem with the loss of valuable metal components thereof. Since a typical inert anode contains combinations of metals that may include nickel, silver, copper and iron, disposal of these anodes

> represents a significant loss to the aluminum industry if these metals are not recovered and either sold or recycled.

It is well known that recycling of metal enhances the environment. This is why many government jurisdictions impose mandatory recycling of metal containing materials such as metal cans.

In addition to the obvious environmental benefit achieved by the recycling of the metal, it is also to be noted that the present invention recovers the aforementioned metal by converting the cermet to a suitable smelter feedstock so that the metal values can be recovered in a smelting procedure which produces a slag product. In this regard it is noted in the first paragraph on page 33 that:

> In addition to the advantageous recovery of metal values from the inert anode material and other cermet materials, the present invention also provides additional advantages. In particular, the slag produced by the primary smelter encapsulates non-recoverable metals found in the inert anode material or other cermet material. This encapsulation immobilizes these metals as the Best Demonstrated Technology (BAT) to minimize leaching and thereby renders these materials sufficiently stable to meet current United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) standards in this regard.

In view of the above, it is clear that the encapsulated non-recoverable metals result in immobilization of these metals so that they are not leached in the environment in which the slag is disposed. Thus, it is self-evident that the ground

water and soil will benefit from the above-noted encapsulated nonrecoverable metals.

In view of the above, it is believed that the present application qualifies for special status under the provisions of 37 CFR § 1.102(c).

Respectfully submitted,

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